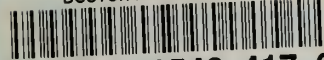


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Back Bay- Beacon Hill- Bay Village

District Profile &
Proposed 1978-1980

Neighborhood
Improvement
Program

City of Boston
Kevin H. White, Mayor
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Neighborhood Planning Program
Summer, 1977

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KEVIN H WHITE
MAYOR

CITY OF BOSTON
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY HALL BOSTON

The Boston Redevelopment Authority's Neighborhood Planning Program has prepared this report to assist residents and City agencies develop longer range solutions to community-wide planning issues.

This "Neighborhood Profile" contains information which helps bring into sharp focus those matters which are of concern to residents of each neighborhood in the City. This information facilitates public understanding and assists all of us--both at City Hall and in the neighborhood--in determining how we can best use the resources available to us.

I hope this booklet serves as an important building block to encourage greater interest in the problems confronting this neighborhood and our City and help us all in developing solutions to these problems.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin H. White".

Kevin H. White
Mayor

Boston Redevelopment Authority

Robert F. Walsh / Director

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1 City Hall Square
Boston, Massachusetts 02201
Telephone (617) 722-4300

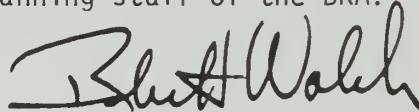
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The Boston Redevelopment Authority, as the City planning agency, is pleased to submit for neighborhood review a profile of Back Bay-Beacon Hill-Bay Village.

It is my hope that the profile can serve as a starting point in the dialogue that should and must take place between neighborhood residents and public officials as decisions are made about the use of community development funds and other matters of public policy.

The decision-making process, of course, must be based on data that is up-to-date and accurate. I am confident that the material contained in this report can be of great assistance to all who care about this neighborhood in particular and the city as a whole.

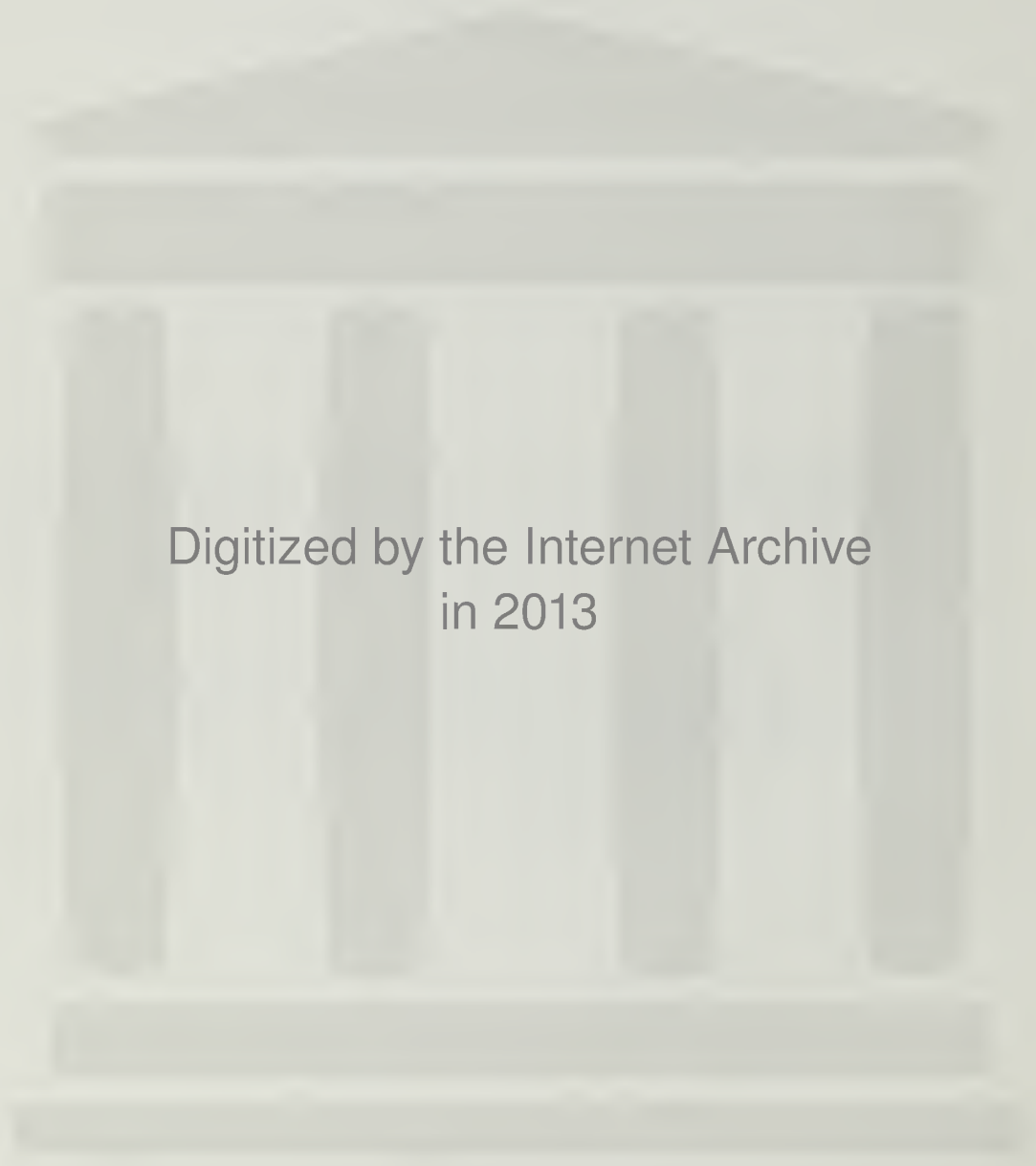
Questions and comments about the material in the report should be directed to the Neighborhood Planning staff of the BRA.



Robert F. Walsh
Director
Boston Redevelopment Authority

This planning report, prepared by the Back Bay/Beacon Hill/Bay Village Neighborhood Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials in defining the needs of, and programs for, the Back Bay/ Beacon Hill/Bay Village area. It is also written to assist prospective residents and investors who are seeking information about the area.

The report includes background information, a discussion of major community planning and development issues and recommended strategies and is intended to assist in the establishment of a long range framework for decision making by the public and private sectors.



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1. BACKGROUND

A. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

1

Unless otherwise noted, population and housing data in the text and table which follow were derived from the 1970 United States Census. Because census recording area lines do not match up precisely with sub-area definitions for planning purposes, approximation is necessary. Data for the district and the City are, therefore, more reliable than that shown for the Back Bay and Beacon Hill sub-areas separately. Additionally, the data does not reflect demographic changes which have occurred since 1969, when the census was taken.

Furthermore, descriptions of the planning district in this section of the report do not include Bay Village. Only the most basic of data are available for this neighborhood; its demographics are briefly described at the end of the section. The relative location of Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Bay Village is shown on the sub-areas map.

BACK BAY/BEACON HILL DISTRICT

According to the census, the district experienced a 13% increase in population between 1960 and 1970, in contrast to the City's 7% decrease. The area's population is increasingly dominated by people aged 15-34, with especially strong gains in the 15-24 age group. The district's affluence relative to the rest of the City is shown by median income figures for families and individuals. In contrast to the City as a whole, the district has a low (23%) proportion of family households and a high (77%) proportion of households comprised of persons living alone or unrelated individuals.

Not surprisingly, a high proportion (85%) of the district's housing units are renter-occupied, and a low proportion (9%) are owner-occupied; the comparable City statistics are 68% and 26% respectively. Likewise, relatively few of the district's housing units are in single-unit and 2-9 unit structures; close to 60% of them are in buildings containing 10 or more units. The proportion of the district's housing (26%) which is in need of major repairs is slightly less than that proportion of the City's housing stock. The district's real estate market is rising, while the market for the City as a whole is considered to be stable.

BACK BAY

The population of the Back Bay is predominantly young adults and students. In recent years there has been an influx of families with children, and with the consolidation of many of the small schools, the college-age population has leveled off and possibly even decreased. Nonetheless, over two-thirds of the population is between the ages of 15 and 35, versus 34% citywide, and the proportion of that age group increased from 1960 to 1970. Although the total population grew by 20% to 18,267, the 15-24 age group

was the only one to significantly increase its relative proportion of the population (from 29% to 48%). Mobility in Back Bay is high, with only 12% of 1970 Census respondents having lived in the same units five years or longer, versus 50% for the city. The student influence is clear, with much of the population in group quarters or non-family households. Median incomes for families and individuals are higher than Boston figures. Some 15% of the area's families, however, earn less than \$5,000 per year.

Housing in the Back Bay is predominantly a mix of quality apartment buildings, lodging houses and dormitories. To this supply was added in the late 1960's 781 luxury apartments in the Prudential Center complex. The recent growth in the conversion of apartments to condominiums* took place after the 1970 Census, which shows owner occupancy at only 8%. Over half (57%) of the City's structures assessed as condominiums are in the Back Bay, typically in 12 to 16 unit structures, although there are four large developments at 180 Beacon Street (114 units), the Copley at Dartmouth and Newbury (79 units), 330 Beacon Street (81 units) and the Vendome (137 units). Properties on street corners were the first to be converted followed by Beacon Street (riverside) and mid-blocks on Commonwealth Avenue. The most attractive properties appear to have been already converted.

By far the majority of Back Bay residents continue to be renters, nonetheless. It was estimated in 1973 that 28% of the subarea's housing stock needed repairs of over \$1,000.

BEACON HILL

Beacon Hill experienced only a very slight (1%) increase in total population between 1960 and 1970, although the relative proportion of people aged 15-34 jumped from 41% to 54%, in contrast to the comparable citywide proportion, which remained about the same. The neighborhood's median income figures for families and individuals are well above citywide medians, and only 12% of Beacon Hill's families earned less than \$5,000 in 1970, contrasted with 22% for the City as a whole. Only about one-quarter of Beacon Hill's households are family households; the remaining three-quarters of the households are comprised of persons living alone or unrelated individuals. In contrast, two-thirds of the City's households are families. Beacon Hill's population is much more mobile than the population of the City as a whole: only 26% of the neighborhood's population has occupied the same housing unit for five or more years, compared to 50% for the City.

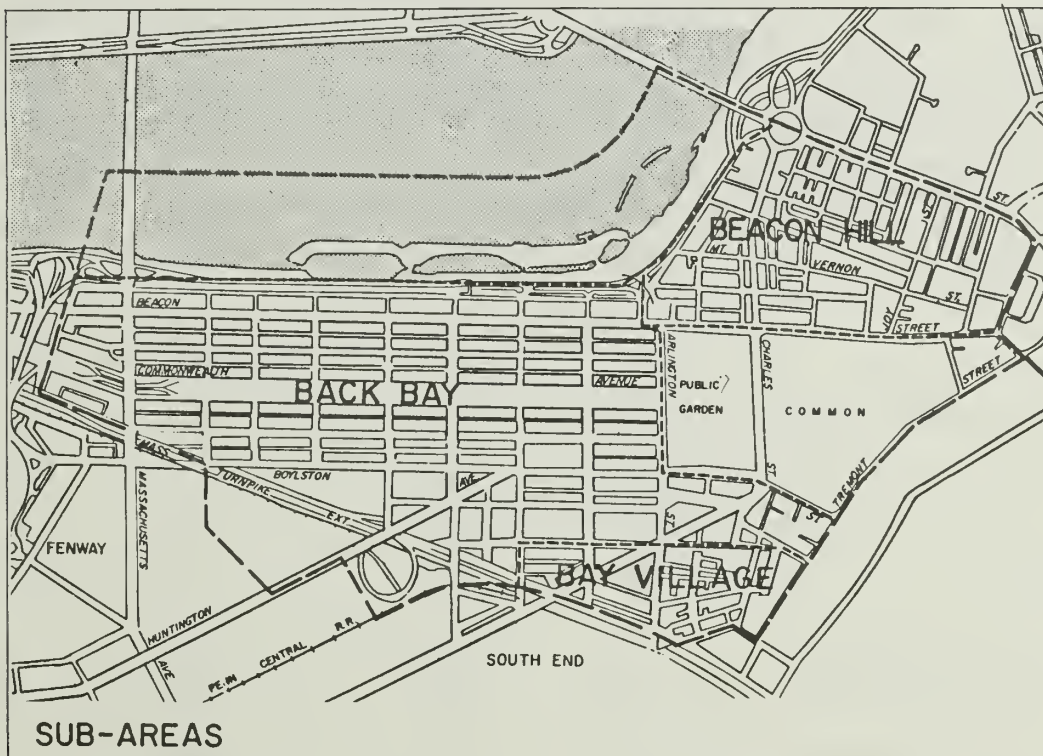
As in the Back Bay, a relatively small proportion (10%) of Beacon Hill's housing units are owner-occupied, and a large proportion (84%) are occupied by renters. 40% of Beacon Hill's housing stock is in buildings containing 10 or more units, contrasted with 67% for Back Bay and 23% for the City. 53% of Beacon Hill's stock is in

* Information on condominiums from 1977 BRA Research Department studies.

2-9 unit buildings, mostly 3-4 story brick townhouses which have been converted to apartments. Since 1971 there have been about two hundred condominium conversions on Beacon Hill mostly in 5-8 unit groups.

BAY VILLAGE

Although the character of the center of Bay Village has changed very little from the time the streets were laid out and the houses built in the middle of the 1800's, the extremities of the area have gradually been encroached upon by commercial and institutional uses, and the number of houses in the area is only about half of what it once was. The predominant character of the area is still rowhouses on small streets. It is Bay Village's relation to the rest of the City, however, that has undergone great change over the years. The area has gone from an outlying residential suburb to being right in the middle of the downtown. The area in recent years has become a very urban neighborhood with many different life styles and income groups. The residents enjoy living in a small neighborhood, but also like being within the downtown core. The population is small with only about 900 people in the area. There is a low degree of resident ownership, with only 10% of the buildings being owner-occupied. The condition of the housing stock is quite good, both due to a large number of federally-funded low interest loans under the BRA's renewal efforts and a strong rental market that has encouraged owners to continue investing in their properties.



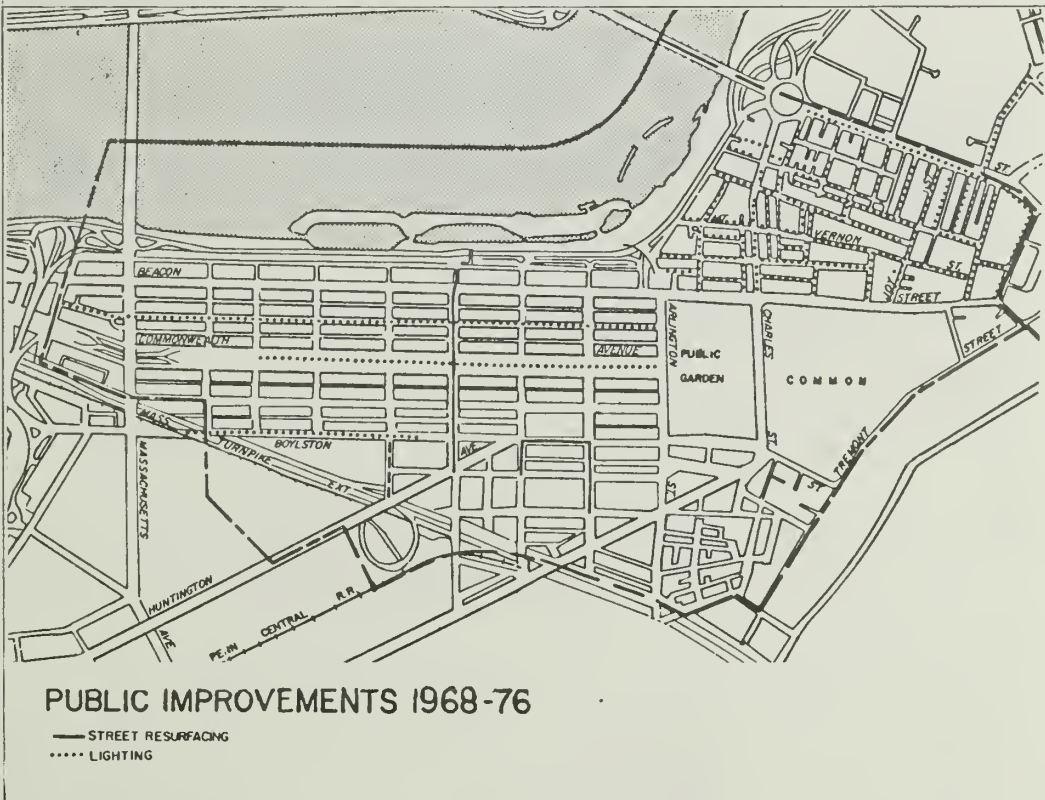
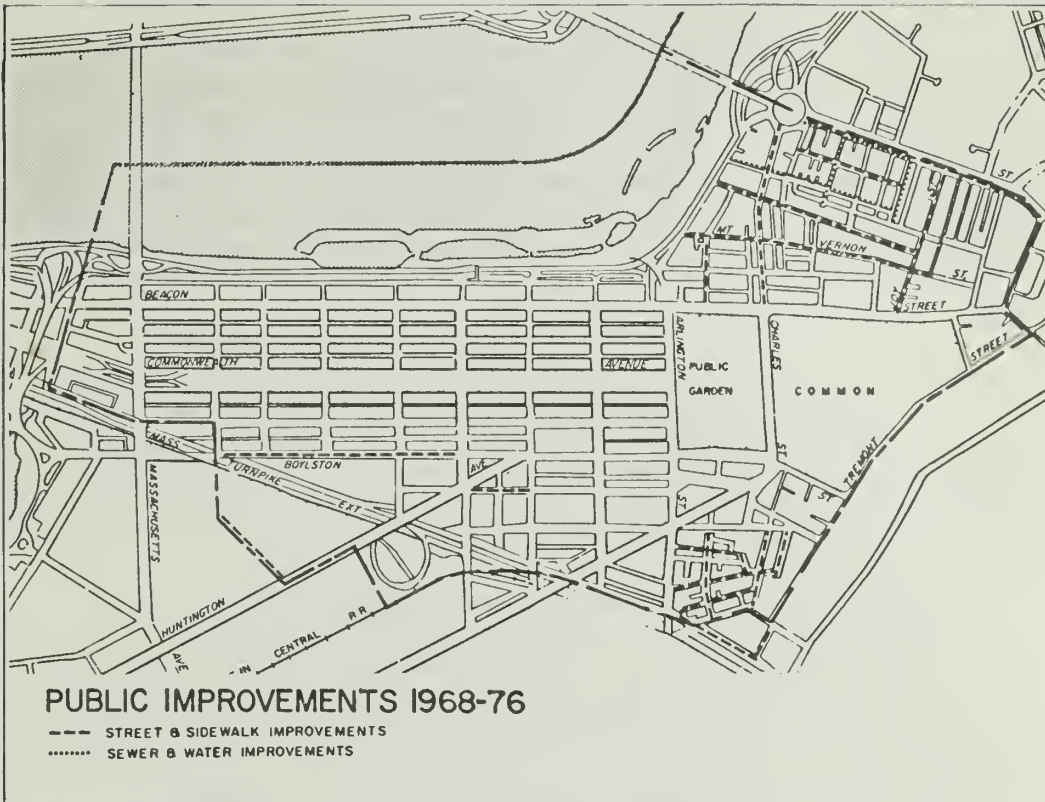
COMPARATIVE STATISTICS - BACK BAY/BEACON HILL

POPULATION	BACK BAY	BEACON HILL	DISTRICT	CITY
Total 1970	18,267	9,259	27,526	639,803
Change from 1960	+20%	+1%	+13%	-7%
Black 1970	478	105	583	104,429
% 1970 total	3%	1%	2%	16%
% 1960 total	2%	2%	2%	9%
Aged 15-24 years	8,843	2,670	11,513	137,858
% 1970 total	48%	29%	42%	22%
% 1960 total	29%	20%	26%	15%
Aged 25-34 years	3,564	2,296	5,860	79,210
% 1970 total	20%	25%	21%	12%
% 1960 total	18%	21%	19%	13%
Aged 65 yrs. & Over	1,907	1,196	3,103	81,437
% 1970 total	21%	13%	11%	13%
% 1960 total	18%	16%	17%	12%
<u>INCOME</u>				
Median Family	\$ 9,584- 19,106	\$10,908- 18,574	\$ 9,584- 19,106	\$ 9,133
Median Individual	\$ 3,360- 7,023	\$ 4,524- 5,645	\$ 3,360- 7,023	\$ 2,189
% Families Under \$5,000	13%	12%	15%	22%
<u>HOUSEHOLD PATTERNS</u>				
Total Households	8,940	5,513	14,453	217,622
Family Households	1,908	1,414	3,322	140,966
% total	21%	26%	23%	65%
Non-Family Households	7,032	4,099	11,131	76,656
% total	79%	74%	77%	35%
Persons in Group Quarters	1,350	302	1,652	39,346
% total population	7%	3%	6%	6%
% Population in Same Unit 5+ years*	12%	26%	24%	50%
<u>HOUSING</u>				
Total Units	7,891	5,880	13,771	232,400
Owner-Occupied Units	613	575	1,188	59,178
% total	8%	10%	9%	26%
Renter-Occupied Units	6,810	4,938	11,748	158,257
% total	86%	84%	85%	68%
Vacant Units	468	367	835	14,966
% total	6%	6%	6%	6%
% Total Units In:				
Single-unit structures	2%	7%	4%	15%
2-9 unit structures	31%	53%	39%	62%
10+ unit structures	67%	40%	57%	23%
Units Needing \$1,000 Fix-up±	28%	23%	26%	29%
Market Condition±	Rising	Rising	Rising	Stable

NOTE: District figures include Back Bay and Beacon Hill Only

* Reliable data available only for district and city

± Data Source is BRA Research Department

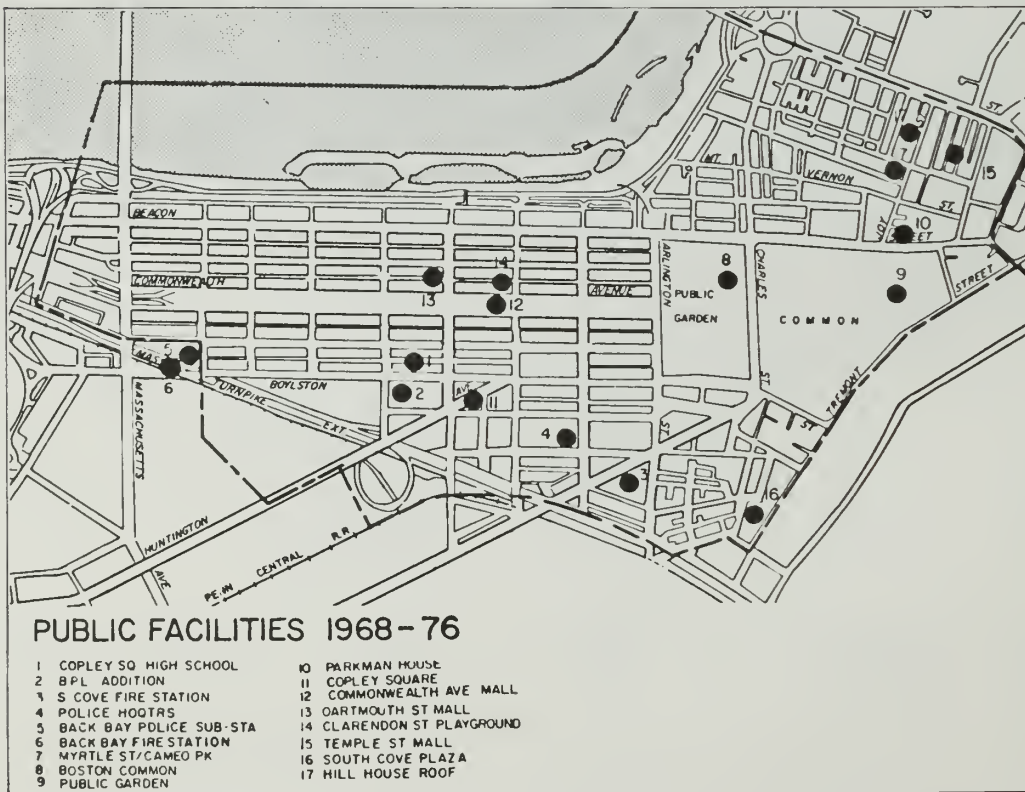


C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT (1968-1976)

The public investments made in Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Bay Village since 1968 have been of considerable benefit to the City and region, as well as to the neighborhoods themselves. A number of public facilities buildings have been renovated, including South Cove Fire Station, Back Bay Fire Station, Back Bay Police Sub-Station, the Parkman House, the Police Headquarters building on Berkeley Street, and Copley Square High School; and a major addition to the Boston Public Library was completed (see map).

Extensive renovation work has been done on the district's major parks of citywide importance: the Boston Common, the Public Garden, Copley Square, and the Commonwealth Avenue Mall. The construction of the Dartmouth Street Mall was also a project of citywide importance. Other open space improvement projects were designed specifically for local use: renovation of the Myrtle Street cameo park and construction of South Cove Plaza, the Temple Street Mall and the Clarendon Street Playground.

Many of the district's major and minor streets have been substantially improved, including street and sidewalk resurfacing or reconstruction, sewer and water work, street lighting, and tree planting. Two such projects, Phase I (Massachusetts Avenue to Exeter Street) of the Newbury Street lighting program, and the planting of 100 trees on Beacon Hill, were funded in 1976 and are being implemented this year.



As part of the South Cove Urban Renewal Project, the 312 rehabilitation loan program (3% interest) has assisted the renovation of many residential buildings in Bay Village.

In 1976, \$50,000 was used to fund a pilot code enforcement program in Back Bay, which is now underway. Public funding was also used to renovate the roof of Hill House, to support the elderly outreach services of Back Bay Aging Concerns, and to continue the business district footpatrol program on Beacon Hill.

D. 1977 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1977 investment program is aimed at preserving and strengthening residential and commercial areas within Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Bay Village, and at meeting the neighborhoods' social service needs.

Capital improvements designated for funding under the City's Community Development Block Grant are repairs to the Old West Church and interior renovations to Hill House in Beacon Hill (\$20,500). Both facilities provide important human services to the area, particularly for the elderly. Bay Bay Aging Concerns will receive \$30,000 to continue elderly services and a police footpatrol will be funded for the Newbury Street and Beacon Hill business districts (\$100,000).

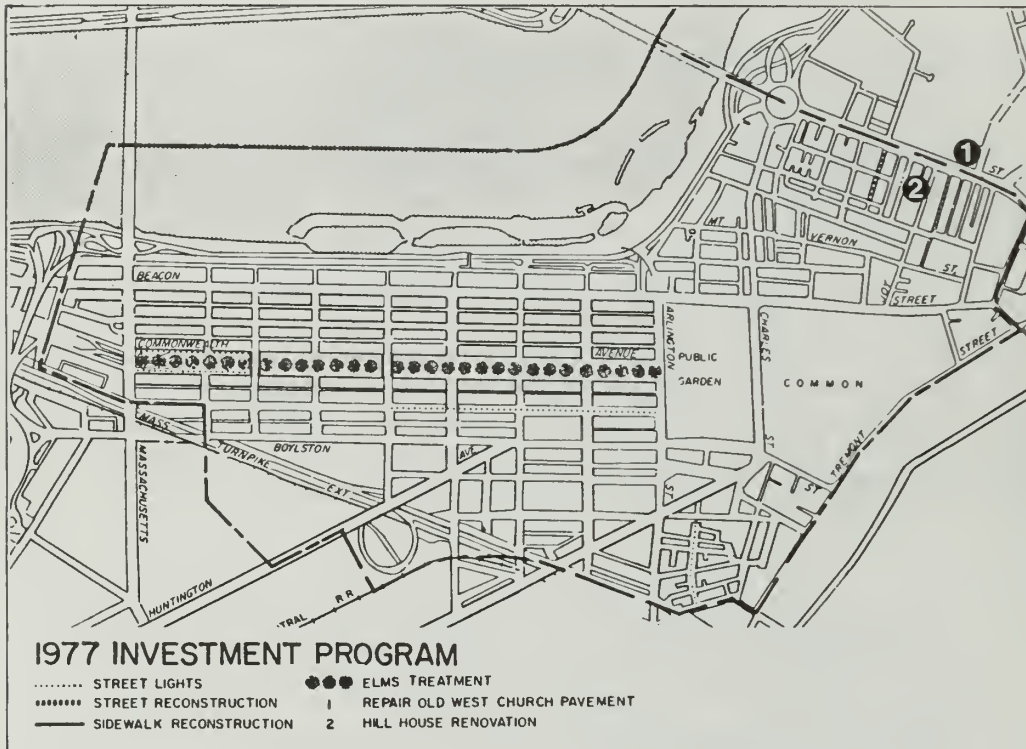
The City's capital budget (long term loans) will fund the following:

1. Sidewalk reconstruction on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall from Exeter Street to Gloucester Street (\$15,000).
2. Lighting on Commonwealth Avenue from Hereford Street to Massachusetts Avenue (\$104,000).
3. The reconstruction of Garden Street in Beacon Hill with brick sidewalks and new sewer and water lines (\$96,000).
4. Street lights on Hancock and Spruce Streets in Beacon Hill and Church Street in Bay Village (\$25,000).

The Newbury Street lighting program will be continued with new lighting from Arlington Street to Exeter Street through the availability of public works funds from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) at the U.S. Department of Commerce (\$150,000). The same program will fund traffic operations improvements and general area reconstruction at the Arlington Street, Providence Street and St. James Avenue intersection and the restoration of the Boston Public Library's inner courtyard.

The City's operating budget will fund a special treatment program for the Elm trees on Commonwealth Avenue.

In July, the City began an innovative one-year Neighborhood Alleyway Improvement Program through the Beacon Hill/Back Bay Little City Hall. Financed through the Federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), the program will provide three coordinators who will identify alleyways needing improvements and cleaning especially to comply with the State Sanitary Code; organize community efforts, and act as liaisons with landlords, tenants, City and State agencies and departments to coordinate cleanup efforts.



2. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES (Mid and Long-Range)

Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Bay Village are distinguished by their historic and architectural quality and integrity, their density, their mixture of uses, and their location in downtown Boston. Each of these characteristics presents great advantages as well as some problems. The key to preserving these fine downtown neighborhoods is in careful monitoring and guidance of changes so that balance can be maintained. This effort depends on local residents and business people as well as government officials, and on policy as well as investment. The following discussion outlines major areas of concern: housing, commercial areas, institutions, major development projects, capital improvement and service needs, and traffic congestion and parking inadequacy.

A. PRESERVATION OF HOUSING STOCK

9

Issue

Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Bay Village are basically sound residential neighborhoods of outstanding architectural quality. The majority of the neighborhoods' buildings are in good condition, and the real estate market seems healthy. These neighborhoods are not, however, without their problems; and public effort and improved services are needed now to preserve them as the important resources they are.

The combination of absentee-ownership, frequent turnover of tenants, and the age of the buildings themselves has resulted in the disrepair of some of the district's structures. The City's Housing Inspection Department estimated in 1973 that about 25% of the dwelling units in the Back Bay and 20% of those in Beacon Hill require over \$1,000 to bring them up to code standards.

Special housing problems are created by lodging houses. Lodging houses serve a definite housing need in these neighborhoods, and quite a number of them operate in a legitimate and orderly manner. For various reasons, however, including the City's tax structure, laxity in licensing and enforcement procedures, and irresponsible ownership, some lodging houses are characterized by code violations, overcrowding, and criminal activity. These problems not only affect the problem buildings themselves but also have a deleterious effect on surrounding buildings.

Institutionally owned property also poses special problems, most notably in the Back Bay. Although incompatibility with other residents of the neighborhood is not that frequent or serious a problem, overcrowding and inadequate maintenance of some of these buildings is. Because of their tax-exempt status, institutions are able to buy up residential property at prices far beyond those of the standard, subject-to-taxes real estate market. Although this trend has decelerated somewhat, it was a common phenomenon until recently. Most educational institutions have either stabilized or reduced the size of their student populations; some are actually closing down. New problems are created as these former school buildings get put on the market. Who can afford to buy these buildings, at the often inflated prices set by the tax-exempt sellers? Sometimes other tax-exempt institutions appear as prospective buyers. Other times, would-be owners wishing to return the buildings to the general residential stock request a tax break. Some buildings coming to the market (former dormitories, the Mt. Vernon Church and the Armory, for example) have additional reuse problems by virtue of their physical form, size and layout.

Strategy

In 1976, the City allocated \$50,000 of Community Development Block Grant money for a pilot code enforcement program in the Back Bay. The money is being used on staff funding to provide coordination in detection, investigation and prosecution of code violations and related problems. The team operates out of the Little City Hall, relying on neighborhood resident block captains for initial referrals, and coordinates with the Housing Inspection, Building and Police Departments, the Boston Licensing Board, Rent Control and the Housing Court. Four months into the program (January to May, 1977), the team had inspected 420 out of an approximate total of 1,000 residential structures in Back Bay. One hundred fifty of the buildings have been cited with code violations, the majority of improper storage of garbage or failure to comply with the plaque law, which requires that the name, address and phone number of the building's owner be clearly posted on the building. This posting makes it easier for tenants to advise the owner of problems which arise in the building, and for building and housing inspectors to cite the owner with violations if problems are not corrected promptly. In neighborhoods like the Back Bay, where rents are high and the market is strong, this sort of sensitive code enforcement is an essential tool in dealing with housing problems. To date the Back Bay program, scheduled for completion in November, 1977, has been very successful - violations have been corrected and the City and the neighborhood (notably the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay) have worked together cooperatively. In the course of the inspection, other housing problems (such as illegal lodging houses) have been detected and turned over to the appropriate authorities; and a great deal of valuable information, concerning owner-occupancy and other housing characteristics, is being compiled. In the future, this program should be undertaken in Beacon Hill, with the cooperation of local groups such as the Beacon Hill Civic Association and the Northeast Slope Neighborhood Association.

The City has some control over institutional property through its zoning code and the Mayor's Policy Statement on Medical and Educational Institutions, which requires these institutions to prepare master plans. Education institutions are currently conditional uses in Boston; proposed amendments to the zoning code, now being reviewed by the Zoning Commission, would make virtually all institutions in Back Bay and Beacon Hill conditional uses. If adopted, these amendments would greatly strengthen the City and the neighborhoods' control over institutional use of property. In recent years, communication among neighborhood residents, City officials and representatives of institutions has improved. Discussion among these groups has begun to occur before decisions are finalized and has resulted in a greater understanding of each group's needs and a more positive and cooperative attitude.

Issue

In addition to two new commercial developments, the Prudential Center and Charles River Plaza, the district includes a number of older commercial areas: Charles Street, Newbury Street, Boylston Street, Cambridge Street, and Massachusetts Avenue. Because of high rents and occasional misjudgment of the market, all of these areas experience fairly high rates of turnover and vacancy. Garish and unattractive signs and facades are a problem on Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston and Cambridge Streets. Restaurants and bars often create environmental problems (noise, trash, fumes, insects, rodents, parking, criminal activity), which are most serious when they are located in mixed business and residential areas, such as Charles and Newbury Streets. Other problems which affect these older business areas include lack of promotional activities and environmental amenities, and inadequate enforcement of parking, sign and dog control regulations.

Strategy

Although public investment and policy can help, the major responsibility for preserving these neighborhood commercial areas rests with local residents and businesses. With the exception of Massachusetts Avenue, the City has done a lot to make these areas safe and attractive. Recent public investment has been allocated for new lights on Newbury Street (Massachusetts Avenue to Exeter Street), trees for Charles Street, and for continuation of the business district footpatrol program. In the future, the footpatrol program should be continued, the remainder of Newbury Street should be lighted, and a comprehensive package of environmental improvements (including trees, low-rise streetlights, trash barrels and other pedestrian amenities) should be programmed and implemented for Massachusetts Avenue. Enforcement of the sign, parking and sanitary codes should be stepped up in all areas. The BRA, in conjunction with local residents and businesses, has recently formulated a draft policy statement regarding the future location of bars and restaurants in Back Bay and Beacon Hill. The policy statement outlines guidelines to be used by the Zoning and Licensing Boards in evaluating restaurant and bar applications; and should help to mitigate many of the problems created by these establishments without stunting normal growth of business. The Newbury Street League has taken initiative in strengthening the Back Bay shopping area, through promotional advertising and events and provision of a shuttle bus serving Newbury and Boylston Streets and the Prudential and Common garages. The City should support their efforts in any way it can. The City should also continue to work with the Cambridge Street Community Development Corporation on their development plans for Cambridge Street, and should find ways to encourage sound private investment on Massachusetts Avenue.

C. INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION/CONTRACTIONIssue

Over half of the real estate in Boston is owned by institutions, ranging from major hospitals and universities to churches and private nursery schools, and the Back Bay/Beacon Hill/Bay Village district has proportionately more institutional ownership than most other neighborhoods. Some of the district's institutions occupy buildings which were either built for their specific use or have been so used for many years; many others have converted space designed and previously used for residential purposes. Typically, a single family brownstone or brick rowhouse would become available because of increased maintenance costs and change in family structure and lifestyle. Because of their endowments and tax-exempt status, institutions could frequently afford to pay inflated prices for such properties, and often (especially during the period of educational expansion during the 1960's and early 1970's) they did just that. Although institutions are a vitally important element of Boston, they also pose problems to the City, especially in the neighborhoods in which they are located. These problems include decline in the tax base; loss (through conversion) of residential units; increase in noise, traffic congestion and parking problems; overcrowding and deterioration of housing; increase in demand for city services; change in commercial areas; and erosion of a neighborhood's residential character. Many of these problems are magnified in the Back Bay/Beacon Hill/Bay Village district because of proximity to downtown and density of development.

Strategy

Some headway has been made in dealing with problems created by institutions in residential neighborhoods. Educational institutions are now conditional uses in Boston, which means that approval of the Zoning Board of Appeal is required before a school can occupy, expand or construct a building. A series of proposed zoning code amendments, now being reviewed by the Zoning Commission, would make hospitals conditional uses throughout the City and virtually all institutional uses conditional in Back Bay and Beacon Hill. If adopted, these amendments would certainly strengthen local control over institutions. The Mayor's Policy Statement on Medical and Educational Institutions has recently proved to be an essential tool in guiding institutional growth and consolidation. The Policy Statement requires that these institutions submit master plans (opportunity for neighborhood and City review) and urges them to make payment in lieu of taxes. The Zoning Board of Appeal has been the mechanism for enforcing these regulations. Problems created by institutions in residential neighborhoods have also been abated somewhat by a shift in policy among most educational institutions from expansion to consolidation; at this point some institutions are contracting, and others have actually closed. This phenomenon presents the possibility of residential reinvestment but

also creates new problems as many properties come onto the market at the same time, often at inflated prices. Although the City controls the use of buildings, it has no formal means for controlling the sale of property. Neighborhood monitoring of changes in ownership is thus essential to a smooth and appropriate transition. The BRA (as the City's planning and development agency) has recently been called upon to advise and guide institutions as they plan relocations and consolidations. This method allows neighborhood groups, City officials and institutions to understand each other's needs and objectives before decisions are made; it should be continued in the future.

D. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Issue

Because of their immediate proximity to downtown Boston, Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Bay Village are affected not only by development which occurs within the neighborhood boundaries but also by development on the fringes and in the heart of the downtown. A number of major projects in varying stages of planning will have an impact on these neighborhoods, including Park Plaza, Copley Square Air Rights development, relocation of the Charles Street Jail, reuse of the existing Charles Street Jail, the Southwest Corridor project and redevelopment along Cambridge Street. More information on these projects can be obtained from the BRA.

Strategy

It is essential that interested parties from Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Bay Village participate in the planning and review of these and other development proposals. In the past this has frequently been accomplished through the involvement of the BRA working with neighborhood groups and developers. This approach is appropriate and has proven to be successful; it should be continued. The following are among those issues of particular concern: traffic congestion and parking; noise and air pollution; creation of shadow and wind; quality and appropriateness of design; height and massing of buildings; open space; pedestrian access; compatibility and appropriateness of the mix of various land uses; and historic preservation.

E. NEIGHBORHOOD CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND SERVICE NEEDS

Issue

The majority of capital improvement expenditures in the 1968-1975 period in the Back Bay/Beacon Hill/Bay Village area were citywide facilities, neighborhood public facilities and major thoroughfare

improvements. The balance of the expenditures were for neighborhood-oriented improvements, such as Beacon Hill lighting and sidewalks. Since 1976 this situation has been reversed, with significant investments committed or planned for neighborhood parks, patch paving, tree planting and lighting. These non-citywide activities, have had a positive and highly visible impact on the district at a minimal cost to the city. Additional expenditures detailed below are of concern to the neighborhoods.

Strategy

In order to preserve these fine downtown neighborhoods, to protect capital investment which has already been made, and to promote additional private investment, certain capital and service improvements are necessary. Capital investment needs include street lighting on Isabella and Cortes Streets in Bay Village, the remaining sections of Newbury Street and Commonwealth Avenue; and completion of renovation work on the Boston Common, the Public Garden and Commonwealth Avenue Mall. Funds should also be budgeted to adequately continue regular maintenance of streets, sidewalks and open space. Service improvement needs include the purchase and use of alley-cleaning equipment, dog control, and stepped-up police efforts in problem areas.

F. TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND PARKING INADEQUACY

Issue

Beacon Hill, Back Bay and Bay Village, as residential neighborhoods in the downtown, share the goal of diverting through-traffic, destined for the Central Business District (CBD) from their neighborhoods. Beacon Hill has been working to confine through traffic to the peripheral streets of Cambridge, Bowdoin, Beacon and Charles; Back Bay has tried to keep through traffic on Storrow Drive, the Massachusetts Turnpike and Boylston Street.

Since these are high-density downtown neighborhoods, car ownership is lower than for the City as a whole. According to statistics compiled by the U.S. Census, 58% of Back Bay-Beacon Hill households had no cars in 1970, as opposed to 47% citywide. In the district, 43% of all workers walk to work and only 19% drive, contrasted with City figures of 15% walkers and 35% drivers.

Parking is nevertheless a continual problem because of the use of the local streets by commuters, office workers and shoppers, as well as residential cars. Illegally parked vehicles, especially on Beacon Hill, make emergency access and street cleaning a problem. Off-street parking in both areas is expensive and not convenient enough to be an attractive alternative for residents, although the Boston Common, Massachusetts General Hospital and Prudential Center garages are used by some residents for monthly parking.

The basic strategy for dealing with traffic congestion in Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Bay Village is as it has been in the past: confining through-traffic to the major peripheral arteries. The strategy is two-pronged: improve access and connections among major arteries, and make interior neighborhood streets unattractive to through-traffic. Some progress has been made, but more work is needed.

A year ago, the City's Traffic and Parking Department improved access to Storrow Drive via Arlington Street by eliminating parking on Beacon Street between Beaver and Arlington Streets, thus creating a free, right-turning lane onto Storrow Drive. Another positive action accomplished recently is the installation of "sleeping policemen" (lateral bumps in the road) on upper Pinckney Street, an effective means of slowing down traffic. If found to be successful, this method should be employed on other Beacon Hill Streets currently used by through-traffic, such as Myrtle, Revere and Joy Streets. Another idea for discouraging through-traffic which has been discussed for some time now, the closing of Myrtle Street between Irving and South Russell, should be done in connection with the reuse of the Boston School Committee Annex Building for elderly housing. In addition, the creation of neck-downs at intersections on residential streets throughout the district should reinforce residential character, improve safety, and discourage through traffic and illegal parking.

Inadequate parking is, and probably always will be, a problem for these in-town neighborhoods. The general strategy for dealing with the problem is to make maximum use of the resources which exist and to promote the creation of new resources. Creation of new parking facilities has been made somewhat more difficult as a result of the restricted parking regulations recently adopted by the City in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency. Free parking and parking for residential, hotel and employee use are still permitted under the new regulations; other parking facilities require a conditional use permit (Zoning Board of Appeal) and a freeze permit (Air Pollution Control Commission) prior to construction. In the long range, use of public transit should be encouraged and use of automobiles within the downtown should be discouraged. Ideally, off-street parking in nearby garages and surface lots should accommodate the bulk of parking need created by business patrons, office workers and residents. Neighborhood employers can help by urging their employees to carpool or use the MBTA and by providing necessary parking through local parking garages and lots. Restaurants and retail stores should encourage their patrons to use off-street parking resources by offering discounts on parking fees and/or participating in a mini-bus service with local parking garages.

Many residents who can afford to do so rent space from these garages on a monthly basis; others participate in the resident parking sticker program, which makes them exempt from meters and other regulations set up to handle short-term parkers (this

program was recently expanded to include Back Bay). Illegally parked cars not only add to traffic congestion problems; they also often pose serious safety problems by obstructing the movement of fire engines and other emergency vehicles. A continuation of the vigorous towing program and use of the "Denver boot" are ways to deal with this problem; creation of neckdowns at critical intersections is another.

Some opportunities do exist for creating new parking spaces. Some new parking can be opened up on certain Beacon Hill streets which are wide enough to accommodate parking on one side. Further, now that the new State House garage has been opened, on-street parking reserved for legislators should be removed immediately. Where possible, new development and rehabilitation of older buildings should provide off-street parking. The Back Bay Task Force recommended in 1970 the ratio of one parking space to one dwelling unit for new construction and one space for every two units of rehabilitated units in buildings over three units. Such a change in the zoning ordinance should be studied, along with alternative plans for bus service to existing garages, possibly sponsored by developers of new buildings.

3. PROPOSED THREE YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (1978-1980) AND LONGER RANGE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND OBJECTIVES

The major goal of the City's efforts is the preservation of the quality of life in the neighborhoods of Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Bay Village.

Implementation of the strategies outlined in the previous section must proceed with several limitations, however.

The federal government has recently strongly emphasized that most of the funds available under the special revenue sharing program, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) serve areas with a pre-dominance of low and moderate income persons. This has resulted in the ineligibility of many proposed improvements in the Back Bay and Beacon Hill neighborhoods. Thus, priorities will have to be addressed primarily with limited City funds.

In the next three years major funding priorities should be:

1. A special code enforcement program staffing for Beacon Hill to detect, investigate and prosecute code violations and related problems.
2. Public and private cooperation to ensure the viability of the local commercial districts through:
 - a. A continuation of the footpatrol program.

- b. Trees for Charles Street (public-private funds, matching program).
- c. A study of environmental improvements that can be made to Massachusetts Avenue from Boylston Street to Beacon Street. Such improvements should include trees, new pedestrian-scale, street lighting, trash barrels, and storefront and sign redesign. Implementation could also begin during the next three years.
- d. A policy for bars and restaurants to improve regulatory efforts and ensure compatibility with adjacent residential properties.

This may result in increasing staffing to ensure enforcement of the sanitary code and parking, safety and noise regulations.

- 3. Capital improvements to leverage private investment, such as the proposed Copley Square development. The site is a large vacant area across from the Boston Public Library. A \$200 million development which would include housing, parking, a hotel and other commercial uses is being evaluated by the City, State and local groups.

Capital improvements to improve neighborhoods quality:

Street Lighting

- a. Isabella and Cortes Streets
- b. Beacon Street (north side from Hereford Street to Massachusetts Avenue.

Open Space/Street Trees

- a. Completion of renovations to the Common, Public Garden and the Commonwealth Avenue Mall; vertical supports for newly planted trees on Beacon Hill

Streets

- a. Alleyway equipment to keep alleys free from debris. Regular street sweepers cannot fit into the narrow rights-of-way.
- b. Anderson Street reconstruction (resurfacing, sidewalks, neckdowns and water line replacement).
- c. Sidewalk reconstruction on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall at Arlington, Berkeley, Clarendon, Fairfield and Hereford Streets.

4. Traffic Improvements

- a. Studies to evaluate the closing of Myrtle Street between Irving and South Russell Streets, the utilization of lateral bumps to discourage high speed through traffic on Joy, Myrtle and Revere Streets, the provision of neckdowns on key streets to improve fire truck access and discourage illegal parking and fast traffic and the implementation of a circulation and parking plan for the State House area.
- b. Pedestrian traffic signal on Spruce Street at Beacon Street.

4. APPENDIX

A. SHORT HISTORY

The Back Bay/Beacon Hill/Bay Village District consists of three historically and architecturally distinct residential neighborhoods whose viability today results in large part from a history of sound planning, adaptability to change, and well-organized community groups.

Beacon Hill

The Hill was originally known as Trimountain but its three peaks were soon cut down to make building possible and start the filling of the Boston shore and river lines. The Hill takes its name from its central peak where a warning beacon stood to protect the colony from Indians and foreign invaders.

The modern history of the Hill started with the building of the new State House near where the old beacon had stood. The south slope, with its views of both the Common and the Charles River, made an ideal location for the fine homes which were in demand in prosperous, post-revolutionary Boston. A syndicate known as the Mt. Vernon Proprietors purchased some 20 acres and laid out Louisburg Square and a grid pattern of streets. They established broad setbacks on Mt. Vernon Street and imposed various deed restrictions so that only brick or stone residences could be built. Only three streets extended all the way across the Hill: Charles, Mt. Vernon and Joy.

The north slope was set apart from the south by two long blocks on the north side of Pinckney Street. Development there took place in a less coherent pattern than the rest of the hill. At the end of the 18th century, the north slope had three distinct sub-areas: a section of stately Bulfinch houses around Bowdoin Square, a "redlight" district near the river, and the first substantial Black neighborhood in Boston between Joy and Phillips Streets. Various events -- the development of the State House, the opening

of the West Boston Bridge across the Charles River, the establishment of Massachusetts General Hospital, the settling of the Back Bay and South End -- led to the rise and fall of the north slope. Wooden and brick houses were built in the first half of the nineteenth century and tenements in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The same fate of changing land use on the edges of the district affected, although to a lesser extent, the south slope. The Back Bay caught the fancy of affluent old families and newly rich alike after the Civil War, and some of the south slope fell into decline. A hard core of old Beacon Hill families never left for the more fashionable Back Bay or the suburbs, however, so this threat of change was held to north of Pinckney Street.

The Beacon Hill Civic Association, founded in 1922, rallied strong community feeling for the Hill. Private capital steadily improved property, and the concerted efforts of the BHCA secured zoning protection and resisted encroachment. Popularity and prices soared in the 20's; prices slumped but popularity only fell off slightly in the depressed 30's. After World War II, as more and more young families remained or came to the Hill, values rose again.

The establishment of the Beacon Hill Historic District with architectural controls in 1955 was a significant factor in the continued improvement of the area. In 1958 the law was strengthened to include the control of the demolition of dwelling units and exterior color, and the historic district was extended to include Lower Beacon Hill, between Charles Street and the Charles River Basin. In 1963 the historic district was extended again to within 40 feet of Cambridge Street and east to Bowdoin Street. The 1964 Boston Zoning Code zoned all of Beacon Hill to a floor area ratio of two with an overall height limit of 65 feet for general residential use except for Charles and Cambridge Streets, which remain for local business. In 1975, the boundaries of the historic district were expanded once again to include Beacon and Park Street frontages up to and including the Granary Burial Ground.

Back Bay

The Back Bay was originally a broad, shallow body of water separating Boston from Brookline and bordering the narrow neck of land access to Roxbury in the vicinity of the present South End. Until the creation of the Public Garden, the marshes of the Back Bay reached Boston Common.

Development of the Back Bay began in 1814 when the Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation proposed a scheme to harness its tidal flow for commercial purposes. A granite-faced mill dam completed

in 1821 stretched across the bay from Charles Street to Sewall's Point (now Kenmore Square) along a route corresponding to the present Beacon Street. A shorter cross-dam intersected the mill dam and divided the Back Bay into full and receiving basins. The project, however, was soon forced to compete with steam powered manufacturing and never became the financial success envisioned by its promoters. Railroad lines built on trestles across the dammed basins in the 1830's further frustrated industrial development by impeding the flow of water in the bay.

By 1840, stagnating Back Bay waters produced such a sewage problem that city health officials demanded the area be filled in the interest of the public welfare. In 1852, a special commission was appointed by the state legislature to prepare a plan for the development of the Back Bay, and the filling operation began five years later. By 1880, the entire area now known as the Back Bay District was solid ground; by 1890, the fill extended beyond Kenmore Square and was continuing along Bay State Road. At its completion, the monumental Back Bay project had added 450 acres of land to the City of Boston.

The design of the Back Bay District was very much influenced by the impressive Parisian boulevards of Second Empire France. Unlike earlier residential plans for Beacon Hill or the South End, the Back Bay was not divided into tree-lined squares but was conceived as a grand scheme of generously landscaped, parallel avenues. Commonwealth Avenue, designed as the dominant boulevard, provided a central linear park and connected the green open spaces of the Common and Public Garden with those of the Fenway system.

From its inception, the Back Bay was planned as both a major civic improvement and a substantial residential district. It soon attracted many of the city's leading families, and the handsome townhouses and splendid mansions that began to line the streets reflected the tastes of fashionable and affluent clientele. Despite many variations in architectural style, the Back Bay was distinguished by the general consistency of character, form and scale. This was strongly encouraged by the original far-sighted deed restrictions, which specified minimum building heights, generous setbacks on all major streets and masonry construction. Together with later limitations on building mass, these restrictions assured the development of a continuous street facade, regular cornice and mansard roof lines, and a repetitive pattern of projecting oriel and bay windows.

The original restrictions against incompatible land uses, more recently replaced by zoning, have protected sizeable sections of the area against commercial encroachment. In 1966, the legislature established the Back Bay Residential District and the Back Bay Architectural Commission, a design review board within the Boston

Redevelopment Authority. All plans for new constructions, demolition, exterior rehabilitation and repair of existing buildings, and all proposals for new signs, awnings and other structural features must be submitted to the Commission for their consideration.

The successful experience of the new Commission in guiding and controlling exterior changes in the Back Bay led to further action to extend the District to cover the adjoining commercial blocks of Newbury and Boylston Streets from Dartmouth Street to Massachusetts Avenue. In 1974 the City Council and the legislature amended the original act to change the name of the area involved to the Back Bay Architectural District and to enlarge the District as mentioned (see map). Since the enlargement of the area of the Commission's jurisdiction, a majority of its formal decisions have related to changes on Newbury and Boylston Street buildings.

Concurrent with establishment of the Back Bay Residential District and Architectural Commission was the ground-breaking for the Prudential Center, a former railroad and lumber yard. This private effort by the Prudential Insurance Company resulted in the construction of 781 apartment units, a shopping mall of 30 stores and 1,534,289 square feet of office space located in two towers, the tallest of which is 52 stories.

Bay Village

The land now known as Bay Village was originally mudflats caused by tidal flow. In 1825, according to the order and plan of the Boston City Council, a dyke was constructed on the flats from a point near Baldwin Mills in a direct line to Fayette Street. This construction project, known as Mill Dam, drained water from the land and made it developable for housing. In the decade or two that followed, streets and lots were laid out, and a residential neighborhood was born. The original lots were 20 feet by 68 feet and carried with them deed restrictions on height and construction material. An accomplished carpenter/builder named Ephraim Marsh, who had extensive land holdings in this part of town, is credited with the original planning for the neighborhood and for supervision of the construction of 300 of the original buildings. His efforts and influence resulted in the creation of a residential neighborhood of unusual charm, intimacy, human scale and architectural integrity -- qualities which have survived to the present day.

In the 1860's and for some years thereafter, the area was known as the Church Street district, in reference to the dominant Presbyterian Church situated on Church Street between Piedmont and Winchester Streets. In 1868, the entire district (including 457 houses, 24 stores and other buildings) was raised 18 feet above mean low water. This monumental task was a necessary solution to the severe sanitary problem created here by the filling of the Back

Bay. The Industrial Revolution brought additional changes to the neighborhood -- increase in immigrant population and conversion of family dwellings to boarding houses, economic depression and hardship, and plummeting real estate values. The neighborhood began a long period of stagnation and gradual decay, which was not broken until the 1960's with the advent of public improvements and rehabilitation assistance through urban renewal. This public effort, coupled with renewed interest of young families and individuals in urban living, has resulted in the preservation and revitalization of this fine downtown neighborhood.

The neighborhood's dominant building type is a two- or three-story red brick rowhouse with high foundation, simple cornices, ridge roof and end chimney, with or without dormers. Most of the houses have six over six sash windows, and square or arched fanlighted doorways a few steps up from street level, an austere reflection of the Federal style. Although the neighborhood is chiefly residential, some institutional and commercial buildings are mixed in, including film distribution companies, restaurants and nightclubs.

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ISSUE	STRATEGY	1977 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	PROPOSED 1978-1980 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
Preservation of Housing Stock	Sensitive code enforcement to improve maintenance & upgrade condition of property; lessen environmental problems (e.g. trash). City & neighborhood monitoring and guidance of changes in institutional property.	Completion of Back Bay Code Enforcement Program (1976 Funding) - \$50,000 Alleyways Program (CETA Funding) - coordinators.	Funding to staff Code Enforcement Program in Beacon Hill \$50,000.
Commercial Area Needs	Code enforcement (sign, parking, sanitary zoning, licensing, police) to improve safety, appearance and mix of establishments. Public investment to improve safety & appearance of commercial districts. Private efforts to promote shopping areas, alleviate parking problems	Policy on location of restaurants & bars for use in zoning & licensing cases. Police footpatrol; Newbury Street lighting (Exeter to Arlington). Newbury Street League & other local business groups: street fairs, promotional advertising, shuttle bus.	Implementation of improved city policy on restaurants and bars. Police footpatrol; maintenance of trees, streets, sidewalks; tree supports in Beacon Hill. City support of private efforts (e.g. possible street closing)
Neighborhood Capital Improvement & Service Needs	Capital improvements where needed to build & maintain neighborhood confidence; regular maintenance to protect investment. Assist in delivery of social services	Street lighting (Newbury); sidewalk reconstruction (Commonwealth Ave. Mall); reconstruction of Garden St. - \$380,000, Elms treatment for Commonwealth Ave.; lighting on Hancock, Spruce, Church Streets. Repairs to Old West Church & Hill House Service funds for Back Bay aging concerns - \$50,500.	Street lighting; rehab Commonwealth Ave. Mall (Mass. Ave. to Charlesgate); street & sidewalk resurfacing and reconstruction as needed; regular maintenance; Assistance as needed and requested; City monitoring of human service delivery of public/private sectors.
Downtown Development Projects	Continue to work with local groups to protect neighborhoods from negative impacts, encourage beneficial aspects (Park Plaza, Copley Sq., Charles St. Jail, Back Bay Station, Cambridge St. redevelopment).	Neighborhood Planning Reviews	Provide necessary public improvements, tax incentives to leverage positive private investment.
Institutional Expansion/Contraction	Policy guidance and coordination to minimize negative impacts and promote benefits to neighborhoods and city.	Neighborhood Planning Reviews	Improve communication with local residents and institutions; control & guidance through Zoning Code and Mayor's Policy Statement on institutions.
Traffic Congestion	Alleviate traffic congestion and parking problems.	Neighborhood Planning Studies	Complete implementation of circulation and parking plan for State House area; vigorous towing program; develop and implement new means to alleviate parking problems.

